

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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July 24, 2012
Start: 10:23 a.m.
Recess: 10:37 a.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E:
DEBORAH L. ROSE
Chairpersons

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Larry B. Seabrook
Julissa Ferreras
Margaret S. Chin
James G. Van Bramer

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Alan Feinblum
Concerned Citizen

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2 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: I call the
3 meeting, the committee hearing and the vote of the
4 Civil Rights Committee that will hear Resolution
5 number 1390 to order, but before I go to my stated
6 remarks, I'd like to first announce that today is
7 the one year anniversary of the Marriage Equality
8 Act in New York. I think we should all give a
9 round of applause and celebrate this momentous
10 occasion, and then we have another momentous
11 occasion—the announcement that my colleague, Jimmy
12 Van Bramer, is getting married this weekend.
13 Congratulations, Jimmy.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Thank
15 you. Thank you very much.

16 [applause]

17 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Good morning.
18 My name is Deborah Rose and I am the chair of the
19 Committee on Civil Rights. Today the Committee
20 will hear and vote on Resolution number 1390, a
21 resolution which will authorize the speaker,
22 Speaker Quinn, to file or join an amicus brief on
23 behalf of the Council in litigation captioned
24 Windsor versus United States currently on appeal
25 on the United States Court of Appeals for the

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2 Second Circuit. For the purpose of supporting the
3 plaintiff's position that Section 3 of the Defense
4 of Marriage Act commonly referred to as DOMA is
5 unconstitutional. In 1996, Congress passed and
6 the president signed DOMA, a law which effectively
7 codified discrimination against same sex couples.
8 Section 3 of DOMA defines the terms marriage and
9 spouse under federal law to mean only heterosexual
10 unions and individuals. At the time of DOMA's
11 passage, no state or country permitted marriage
12 between two people of the same sex, but a lot has
13 changed since 1996. Now same sex couples can
14 legally marry in six states, including New York
15 and 11 different countries. Today we celebrate an
16 anniversary of that. Unfortunately however
17 because of DOMA same sex couples continue to be
18 discriminated against. That brings me to the
19 story of Edith Windsor and Thea Spyer. Edith
20 Windsor and Thea Spyer, residents of New York
21 City, were in a committed relationship for over 40
22 years when they finally married in Canada in 2007.
23 Sadly, Ms. Spyer, who had lived with multiple
24 sclerosis for many years, died in 2009. At the
25 time of Ms. Spyer's death, Ms. Windsor was the

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2 ensuring that all people are treated equally, and
3 with that, before I ask that the vote be taken on
4 Resolution 1390, we have two individuals who would
5 like to testify. I'm going to ask that your
6 comments are specifically related to DOMA and that
7 you will be held to three minutes. I'd like to
8 call Paula Feinblum [phonetic] and Alan Feinblum
9 [phonetic].

10 ALAN FEINBLUM: My name is Alan
11 Feinblum, and this is my wife, Paula Feinblum.
12 We've been married 50 years in February. We have
13 two grown children and four grandchildren. The
14 reason I'm here today is I feel that people who
15 love each other, that are committed to each other
16 for a lifetime should be allowed to be married and
17 have the full benefits of marriage. They
18 shouldn't be penalized whether it's a man and a
19 man or a woman and a woman or a woman and a man.
20 Everybody should be treated equally. This
21 Committee is on Civil Rights. This is a point
22 that I'm interested in—civil rights for people in
23 regards to marriage, in regards to people who have
24 mental illness, and people that are in prison and
25 I intend to go before different committees and

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2 express my views, and this is a good opportunity
3 for any citizen to be able to speak up rather than
4 just writing letters to the editor and being
5 frustrate. This is an actual place where you can
6 actually express yourself. Unfortunately, the
7 Council is subject to state and federal bodies.
8 For example, I was at one meeting about marijuana.
9 Everybody on the Committee, except the chairman,
10 was for this, and the bill passed, but when it
11 went to Albany rather than discussing it since it
12 became a Democrat and Republican issue and it's
13 very frustrating as a citizen that people—every
14 issue is not black and white. Every issue becomes
15 whether you're Republican or you're a Democrat,
16 whether you're right wing or left wing, whether
17 you're progressive or backwards, these issues are
18 serious issues. They affect the citizens of the
19 United States and of this city. People can't just
20 feel that their wishes are ignored—

21 [crosstalk]

22 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: [Interposing]

23 Mr. Feinblum, your remarks are most elucidating
24 and important to us, but the purpose of this
25 hearing and it really is not a full hearing, it's

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2 a vote on the domestic marriage act, and so you'll
3 have to confine your remarks to that, and we will
4 invite you back to a Civil Rights hearing where
5 you can express your other concerns, okay?

6 ALAN FEINBLUM: Okay. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay. Thank
8 you. Thank you so much. Okay. Oh, are you going
9 to testify, Ms. Feinblum?

10 ALAN FEINBLUM: She's the quiet
11 one.

12 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Oh okay. Okay.

13 ALAN FEINBLUM: I do all the
14 talking in this family.

15 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: So does that
16 conclude your testimony?

17 ALAN FEINBLUM: Yes. Yes. Thank
18 you very much,

19 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you so
20 much. Thank you. Thank you. Before we go to the
21 vote, my colleague, Jimmy Van Bramer, would like
22 to make remarks.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Thank
24 you very much, Chairwoman Rose. I would just like
25 to state for the record that in my relationship

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2 with Dan Hendrick there is no quiet one, so I just
3 wanted to say how important I think this
4 resolution is. Obviously in the week that I will
5 be married to my partner of the last 13 and a half
6 years, this is very important for me, but it's
7 also very important for so many other young
8 people, gay and lesbian and straight, who one day
9 will grow up in a world where there are endless
10 possibilities and that the love that two people
11 share and the commitment that two people
12 experience will be granted equal status in every
13 state in this country and obviously, Edith
14 Windsor's story is a very, very powerful one and I
15 believe that her case will one day be instrumental
16 in overturning DOMA and making sure that gay and
17 lesbian people can get married all over the
18 country. I just want to say on a personal level,
19 I never thought that I would be able to get
20 married when I came out in 1989 when I was 19
21 years old as a gay man, but it is so exciting that
22 younger gay people, lesbian people will have that
23 right and will have those endless possibilities,
24 one of whom is sitting to my right, Damien Butvig,
25 who is a staff person, got engaged on Saturday to

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2 his partner, and it is so exciting 'cause I asked
3 Damien when he told me how old he was, and I won't
4 reveal that for the record, Damien, but it is so,
5 so exciting that we live in a world now where
6 people who love each other can get married and
7 will have that possibility, so congratulations,
8 Damien.

9 DAMIEN BUTVIG: Thank you - - .

10 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: thank
11 you, Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you,
13 Jimmy. Margaret, do you have any comments?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I'm really
15 proud to be a cosponsor of the resolution. I
16 really love your testimony because I'm going on to
17 my 35th year and I think for people who love each
18 other, they all should have this opportunity to be
19 in a marriage, and so I strongly support this
20 resolution and thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you,
22 Council Member Chin. With that, I'd like to just
23 thank my counsel, - - Beckford and my policy
24 analyst, Damien Butvig, and I'd like to
25 congratulate him also on his engagement and now if

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2 there are no further comments, I will open the
3 vote.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK: Kevin Pin,
5 Committee Clerk. Roll call in the Committee on
6 Civil Rights to Resolution 1390. Council Member
7 Rose?

8 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Aye.

9 COMMITTEE CLERK: Ferreras?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: If I
11 could just explain my vote? I just want to
12 publically and on the record thank my dear friend,
13 Council Member Van Bramer. I'm looking forward to
14 his wedding this weekend. And also, when we talk
15 about partnerships and what that means for New
16 York City, when people are in love and happy, it
17 just makes for better governing, but it also makes
18 for a better New York City. I think if--one of
19 things that I'm most proud of being the board of
20 member of La Leya [phonetic], which is a national
21 organization of Latina elected officials. When I
22 go and visit other states and they are so excited
23 and so proud of New York in particular because
24 we've made motions and laws and passed--and done
25 things that are progressive and not backwards like

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2 was mentioned earlier. I love that, by the way.
3 So I vote aye very, very proud and looking forward
4 to a great Saturday night.

5 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Alright.

6 COMMITTEE CLERK: Chin?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Aye.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK: Van Bramer?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Aye.

10 COMMITTEE CLERK: By a vote of four
11 in the affirmative, zero in the negative, no
12 abstentions, the item has been adopted. Members,
13 please sign the Committee Report.

14 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you.

15 Should we hold it open? Thank you all so much.

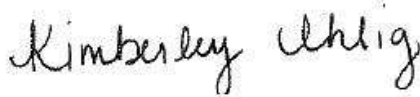
16 This meeting is now adjourned.

17 [gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Kimberley Uhlig certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature _____

Date _____ 8/6/12